

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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BEFORE THE PATENT TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

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C. DOUGLASS **THOMAS** and ALAN E. THOMAS  
Junior Party  
(Patent Nos. 5,974,557; 6,216,235; 6,487,668)<sup>1</sup>

v.

JACK D. **PIPPIN**  
Senior Party  
(Application 10/464,482)<sup>2</sup>

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Patent Interference No. 105,802 (JL)  
(Technology Center 2100)

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Before JAMESON LEE, MICHAEL R. ZECHER, and JUSTIN T. ARBES,  
*Administrative Patent Judges.*

ARBES, *Administrative Patent Judge.*

**Judgment – Merits – Bd. R. 127**

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<sup>1</sup> Patents 5,974,557; 6,216,235; and 6,487,668 have been accorded the benefit of Application 08/262,754, filed June 20, 1994, now Patent 5,752,011. The real party in interest is IpVenture, Inc. Paper 12.

<sup>2</sup> Filed June 19, 2003. Accorded the benefit of Application 08/124,980, filed September 21, 1993. The real party in interest is Intel Corporation. Paper 4.

In a concurrent paper, Thomas's Motion 1 (Paper 29) seeking to designate certain claims of Thomas's involved patents as not corresponding to the count has been denied. There are no other pending motions in this interference. Thomas also indicated that as the junior party, it would not be filing a priority motion. Paper 25 at 2, 7. As such, Thomas concedes priority with respect to any claim left as corresponding to the count after consideration of Thomas's motion to designate claims as not corresponding to the count. *Id.* Accordingly, as Thomas's Motion 1 has been denied and all of Thomas's involved claims correspond to the count, it is now appropriate to enter judgment against party Thomas.

It is

**ORDERED** that judgment with respect to Count 1 is entered against junior party C. DOUGLASS THOMAS and ALAN E. THOMAS;

**FURTHER ORDERED** that claims 1-47 of junior party's involved Patent 5,974,557; claims 1-54 of junior party's involved Patent 6,216,235; and claims 1-52 of junior party's involved Patent 6,487,668, which correspond to Count 1, are cancelled;

**FURTHER ORDERED** that the parties shall note the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 135(c) and Bd. R. 205; and

**FURTHER ORDERED** that a copy of this judgment shall be entered into the files of Patents 5,974,557, 6,216,235, and 6,487,668, and Application 10/464,482.

Interference No. 105,802  
Thomas v. Pippin

By Electronic Transmission:

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C. DOUGLASS **THOMAS** and ALAN E. THOMAS  
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Patent Interference No. 105,802  
(Technology Center 2100)

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Before JAMESON LEE, MICHAEL R. ZECHER, and JUSTIN T. ARBES,  
*Administrative Patent Judges.*

ARBES, *Administrative Patent Judge.*

**Decision – Motions – Bd. R. 125(a)**

1           This interference was declared on April 18, 2011. The sole pending motion  
2   is Thomas’s Motion 1, which seeks to designate the following claims of  
3   Thomas’s involved patents as not corresponding to the count:  
4           Patent 5,974,557 (“Thomas ‘557”): claims 24 and 25  
5           Patent 6,216,235 (“Thomas ‘235”): claims 24-36, 41, 42, and 46-54

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Patent 6,487,668 (“Thomas ‘668”): claims 1-5, 12-23, and 37-52

The remaining claims of Thomas’s involved patents, which Thomas has not moved to designate as not corresponding to the count, are:

Patent 5,974,557: claims 1-23 and 26-47

Patent 6,216,235: claims 1-23, 37-40, and 43-45

Patent 6,487,668: claims 6-11 and 24-36

Pippin opposes Thomas’s Motion 1. Because Thomas fails to demonstrate by a preponderance of the evidence that claims 24 and 25 of Thomas ‘557, claims 24-36, 41, 42, and 46-54 of Thomas ‘235, and claims 1-5, 12-23, and 37-52 of Thomas ‘668 should be designated as not corresponding to the count, Thomas’s Motion 1 is *denied*.

#### PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The parties’ initial requests for authorization to file various motions were resolved in an Order dated June 16, 2011. Paper 25. Thomas requested authorization to file a motion to designate its involved claims as not corresponding to the count, citing 113 allegedly distinguishing features of its involved claims. Paper 22. Thomas was ordered to limit its list to a reasonable number of limitations and authorized to file a motion to designate its involved claims as not corresponding to the count only on the basis of numbered features 1, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 86, 93, and 98 in Thomas’s list. Paper 25 at 6. The Order specifically noted that the motion “must account for not just the count as prior art, or just the prior art references of record in either party’s involved cases, but also any prior art otherwise known to party Thomas as well as

1 the level of ordinary skill in the art.” Paper 25 at 6. The Order also required  
2 Thomas to set forth the closest prior art feature known to Thomas and the closest  
3 known feature within the level of ordinary skill in the art, giving specific  
4 examples of what should be provided for features 1 and 6. Paper 25 at 6-7.

5 In a subsequent Order, Thomas also was authorized to rely on feature 46 to  
6 support the attempt to designate claims 12 and 49 of Thomas ‘668 as not  
7 corresponding to the count; on features 62 and 63 to support the attempt to  
8 designate claim 4 of Thomas ‘235 as not corresponding to the count; on feature  
9 67 to support the attempt to designate claim 7 of Thomas ‘235 as not  
10 corresponding to the count; and on feature 69 to support the attempt to designate  
11 claim 24 of Thomas ‘235 as not corresponding to the count. Paper 27 at 2-3.

12 All other requests for motions by the parties were either dismissed or  
13 denied. Paper 25 at 3-7. Thomas also indicated that as the junior party, it would  
14 not be filing a preliminary statement or priority motion. Paper 25 at 2, 7. Thus,  
15 Thomas’s Motion 1 is the only pending motion in this interference.

16  
17 FINDINGS OF FACT

18 The following findings of fact are supported by a preponderance of  
19 evidence.

- 20 1. Junior party Thomas is involved in this interference on the basis of three  
21 patents: Patent 5,974,557; Patent 6,216,235; and Patent 6,487,668.  
22 2. Senior party Pippin is involved in this interference on the basis of  
23 Application 10/464,482, filed June 19, 2003.  
24 3. Thomas’s real party in interest is IpVenture, Inc. Paper 12.

4. Pippin's real party in interest is Intel Corporation. Paper 4.

5. The sole count in this interference is Count 1, which is defined as:

Claim 34 of Pippin's Application 10/464,482

6. Claim 34 of Pippin's Application 10/464,482 reads as follows:

34. A computer system comprising:

an active cooling device;

a microprocessor comprising:

a register storing a register value corresponding to a threshold temperature;

a programmable thermal sensor receiving the register value, wherein the programmable thermal sensor generates a first interrupt signal if a microprocessor temperature exceeds the threshold temperature,

wherein the active cooling device is activated in response to the interrupt signal, and

wherein the active cooling device comprises a fan; and  
clock circuitry for providing a clock signal for the microprocessor,

wherein a frequency of the clock signal is reduced in response to the first interrupt signal.

*The Thomas Involved Patents*

7. The Thomas involved patents disclose that "[t]he second embodiment is particularly advantageous for portable computing devices because it conserves battery life by using a sleep clock when no processing is needed." *E.g.*, Thomas '557, col. 4, l. 66-col. 5, l. 1.

*Sheets (Patent 4,670,837)*

8. Sheets discloses determining the current rate of required microprocessor activity and varying the clock frequency of the microprocessor based on that rate. Abstract; col. 1, ll. 45-54; col. 3, ll. 18-21.
9. As described in Sheets, the “present invention is directed to reducing the amount of energy drawn by system 100 from . . . a [Direct Current] DC source,” such as a battery. Col. 2, ll. 37-43.
10. Sheets discloses: “[Voltage-controlled oscillator (VCO) 102] gradually adjusts the frequency of the clock signal transmitted to microprocessor 101 to the computed frequency in response to the digital word. Reducing the clock frequency reduces the power consumed by microprocessor 101 and, by reducing the required access rate to the associated devices, i.e., ROM 107, RAM 108, and I/O port 109, also reduces the power consumed by those devices. The power reduction is substantially directly proportional to the reduction of the clock frequency. For example, a frequency reduction from 20 megahertz to 10 megahertz will result in a saving of approximately 50%.” Col. 2, l. 65-col. 3, l. 8.

*Georgiou (Patent 5,189,314)*

11. Georgiou discloses detecting processor activity and varying the clock frequency of the processor based on that activity. Abstract; col. 2, ll. 10-20, 40-41.
12. As described in Georgiou, “[i]n accordance with this invention, heat production is controlled in accordance with needs through changes in clock



- 1 rate (i.e., by slowing down the clock rate when a circuit is idling), in order  
2 to make it possible to speed up the clock rate when performing either  
3 special critical work or useful work in general.” Col. 2, ll. 10-16.
- 4 13. Georgiou discloses that “[w]hen a circuit is switched to a lower clock rate,  
5 there is a heat generation savings. Given a certain heat dissipation capacity  
6 (based on the characteristics of the chip and package), it is possible to  
7 switch the clock to a higher rate, if enough heat savings have been  
8 accumulated.” Col. 2, ll. 20-25; col. 3, ll. 33-38.

9  
10 *Pippin ‘578 (Patent 5,838,578)*

- 11 14. Application 08/660,016, which issued as Pippin ‘578, was filed on June 6,  
12 1996.
- 13 15. Pippin ‘578 is a continuation of application 08/124,980, filed on  
14 September 21, 1993.
- 15 16. Pippin ‘578 issued on November 17, 1998.
- 16 17. Pippin ‘578 discloses generating a first interrupt signal based on the  
17 temperature of a microprocessor exceeding a first threshold temperature,  
18 activating a fan and reducing clock frequency in response to the first  
19 interrupt signal, and programming a new, higher threshold temperature in  
20 response to the first interrupt signal. Col. 12, ll. 24-51.
- 21 18. Pippin ‘578 discloses generating a second interrupt signal based on the  
22 temperature of the microprocessor exceeding the new, higher threshold  
23 temperature, and further reducing clock frequency in response. Col. 12,  
24 ll. 51-54.

19. Pippin '578's two-stage configuration "provides close loop control of the microprocessor system clock frequency, thereby automatically reducing the temperature when overheating occurs." Col. 12, ll. 54-58.

*Swamy (Patent 5,623,594)*

20. Swamy discloses an "overtemperature detection circuit" that takes "periodic readings" of a processor's operating temperature to determine whether the temperature exceeds a "predetermined maximum allowed temperature." Col. 7, ll. 10-28; col. 2, ll. 30-40.

21. Swamy discloses sending a signal to various components to attempt to cool the processor if the predetermined temperature is exceeded. "For example, the signal may instruct the fan 240 to turn on or increase speed if already on. Alternatively, the signal may send a message to the user through the video subsystem 280, or it may instruct the [Central Processing Unit] CPU clock 250 to decrease the operational speed of the CPU 260. As a last resort, the signal may instruct the CPU 260 to save the document presently being worked on to the disk 320 and turn the power to the [Personal Computer] PC off." Col. 7, ll. 34-41; col. 2, ll. 40-51.

22. Swamy discloses that "[t]he component to which the signal is sent may depend on how extreme the temperature of the CPU 260 has become and how long the temperature has been at the excessive level." Col. 7, ll. 30-33.

23. Swamy discloses that the signals sent in an attempt to cool the processor "can be programed to occur in several different combinations." Col. 6, l.

64-col. 7, l. 1.

*Neal (Patent 5,483,102)*

24. Neal discloses the thermal management of a semiconductor device and, in particular, reducing an internal clock frequency of the semiconductor device upon receiving a first signal indicating fan failure and/or a second signal indicating thermal overload. Col. 1, ll. 9-14.
25. Neal discloses that fans for cooling semiconductor devices commonly employ a chip set to generate a motor pulse at a given frequency to drive a fan motor. Col. 5, ll. 31-33. By altering the frequency of the motor pulse, Neal discloses that the fan is driven at various speeds, thereby increasing or decreasing the fan's airflow production. Col. 5, ll. 33-36.

*Dinh (Patent 5,526,289)*

26. Dinh discloses a fan cooling subsystem for a personal computer wherein the speed of the fan is adjustable based on the temperature within the housing of the personal computer. Col. 1, ll. 10-13.
27. Dinh discloses that it may be desirable to have two speeds for a fan: (1) when the computer's elements are operating at a low temperature, the fan blows quietly at a low speed, and (2) when the computer's elements are hot, the fan blows rapidly and loudly at a high speed. Col. 1, ll. 29-35.
28. Dinh discloses that "there is a need for a fan subsystem which can increase the fan speed proportionally to the increase in the temperature of the computer's elements. Such a fan subsystem would evenly match the temperature inside the computer with the fan speed necessary to cool the

1 system. Thus, a computer system with such a fan subsystem would provide  
2 the most efficient trade off between fan speed and sound quality.” Col. 1,  
3 ll. 44-51.

4  
5 ANALYSIS

6 Thomas’s Motion 1 seeks to designate claims 24 and 25 of Thomas ‘557,  
7 claims 24-36, 41, 42, and 46-54 of Thomas ‘235, and claims 1-5, 12-23, and 37-  
8 52 of Thomas ‘668 as not corresponding to the count. Thomas as the moving  
9 party bears the burden of proof to establish entitlement to the relief requested. 37  
10 C.F.R. § 41.121(b). A claim corresponds to a count if the subject matter of the  
11 count, treated as prior art to the claim, would have anticipated or rendered  
12 obvious the subject matter of the claim. 37 C.F.R. § 41.207(b)(2). Thus, unlike  
13 other situations, such as a civil action for patent infringement where the moving  
14 defendant asserts that the claimed subject matter is anticipated or obvious,  
15 Thomas as the moving party bears the burden of establishing a negative, i.e., that  
16 the subject matter of the claims is *not* anticipated or obvious in light of the count  
17 and any other applicable prior art.

18 It is evident that the count, if treated as prior art, would not have  
19 anticipated any of the claims which Thomas seeks to designate as not  
20 corresponding to the count. Thus, the proper analysis is one of obviousness per  
21 *Graham v. John Deere Co. of Kansas City*, 383 U.S. 1, 17-18 (1966). The  
22 pertinent factual inquiries are (1) the scope and content of the prior art, (2) the  
23 differences between the claimed invention and the prior art, (3) the level of  
24 ordinary skill in the art, and (4) any objective evidence of nonobviousness. *Id.* at

17. The obviousness conclusion is reached from the perspective of the hypothetical person having ordinary skill in the art who is presumed to be aware of all pertinent prior art. *Standard Oil Co. v. American Cyanamid Co.*, 774 F.2d 448, 454 (Fed. Cir. 1985). Also, a person of ordinary skill in the art has ordinary creativity and is not an automaton. *KSR Int'l Co. v. Teleflex Inc.*, 550 U.S. 398, 421 (2007). If a technique has been used to improve one device, and a person of ordinary skill in the art would recognize that it would improve similar devices in the same way, using the technique is obvious unless its actual application is beyond his or her skill. *Id.* at 417.

To prevail in its motion, Thomas must demonstrate by a preponderance of the evidence that each of the claims it seeks to designate as not corresponding to the count would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, given the subject matter of the count as prior art and any other applicable prior art. Thomas in its motion identifies a number of features in its claims that allegedly distinguish the count and other prior art, and groups the involved claims accordingly. We address each group of claims in turn.

For all of the reasons discussed below, Thomas has not satisfied its burden of proof that the collective differences between each claim it seeks to designate as not corresponding to the count and the subject matter of the count are such that the claim would not have been obvious over the count and other applicable prior art.

*Feature 6 – Varying Clock Frequency Based on  
Processor Activity and Temperature*

Thomas argues that claims 24 and 25 of Thomas ‘557, claims 30, 31, 41, 42, 50, 53, and 54 of Thomas ‘235, and claims 1-5, 18, 19, and 37-48 of Thomas ‘668 recite the feature of varying clock frequency based on both processor activity and temperature. For example, claim 1 of Thomas ‘668 recites a clock control unit operating to “alter the clock frequency of the clock signal in a gradual and dynamic manner based on the temperature of said processing unit as monitored by said temperature sensor and on the activity of said processing unit as monitored by said activity detector.” Thomas contends that the involved claims would not have been obvious over the count and other prior art based on this feature.

At the outset, we note that claims 30 and 41 of Thomas ‘235 and claim 18 of Thomas ‘668 recite varying *fan speed*, not clock frequency, based on processor activity and temperature. Thomas acknowledges that these claims do not have feature 6.<sup>1</sup> Paper 38 at 18 (admitted fact 77). Accordingly, the analysis below applies to the remaining claims 24 and 25 of Thomas ‘557, claims 50, 53, and 54 of Thomas ‘235, and claims 1-5, and 37-48 of Thomas ‘668.

The count discloses varying clock frequency based on temperature, not processor activity. Thomas, however, admits in the background section of its involved patents that clock frequency variation based on processor activity was known at the time. *See, e.g.*, Thomas ‘557, col. 1, ll. 18-20 (“It is also known to

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<sup>1</sup> Claim 30 of Thomas ‘235 includes feature 69 and claim 18 of Thomas ‘668 includes feature 46, however, as discussed below.

1 suspend or slow a computer's processor (e.g., microprocessor, CPU) when the  
2 processor is not actively processing. . . . [In one exemplary reference,] the sleep  
3 mode either stops the clock or slows it to 4 MHz.”); Paper 38 at 18 (admitted fact  
4 80). Thus, clock frequency variation based on processor activity and based on  
5 temperature were both old and well known individually in the prior art. The issue  
6 before us is whether the claims reciting the combined feature of varying clock  
7 frequency based on processor activity *and* temperature would have been obvious  
8 to one of ordinary skill in the art given the count itself and other applicable prior  
9 art.

10 Thomas points to testimony from its expert, Dr. Douglas P. McNutt,  
11 identifying Nakagawa (Japanese Patent Application 1990-83720, Exhibit 2010) as  
12 “the closest known prior art with respect to the feature of frequency reduction”  
13 and Kenny (Patent 5,287,292) as “the closest prior art known with respect to the  
14 feature of activity monitoring.” Paper 29 at 13-15. We disagree that Nakagawa  
15 and Kenny are the closest prior art references for purposes of feature 6. Indeed,  
16 Thomas admits that “[t]here is no activity detector in Nakagawa.” Paper 29 at 13.  
17 Nakagawa therefore cannot be the closest prior art for claims including the feature  
18 of varying clock frequency based on processor activity and temperature.

19 The prior art references cited by Pippin — Sheets and Georgiou — are more  
20 relevant to the involved claims reciting feature 6, and reflect the level of ordinary  
21 skill in the art at the time. *See In re GPAC Inc.*, 57 F.3d 1573, 1579 (Fed. Cir.  
22 1995) (agreeing with the Board’s conclusion that “the level of ordinary skill in  
23 the art . . . was best determined by appeal to the references of record”). Sheets  
24 discloses detecting processor activity and reducing clock frequency in times of

low activity. Sheets, col. 1, ll. 45-54 (“determining the processing load presented to the system and then reducing the clock frequency at which the system is driven, during times when the processing load is reduced”). By doing so, Sheets reduces the consumption of power from a battery. Sheets, col. 2, ll. 37-43; col. 2, l. 65-col. 3, l. 8 (“[r]educing the clock frequency reduces the power consumed by microprocessor 101”). As Pippin points out, this is the same reason given in Thomas’s involved patents for varying clock frequency based on processor activity. *See* Paper 35 at 14; Thomas ‘557, col. 4, l. 66-col. 5, l. 1 (“The second embodiment is particularly advantageous for portable computing devices because it conserves battery life by using a sleep clock when no processing is needed.”). Georgiou similarly discloses reducing clock frequency in times of low activity to reduce heat generation, and increasing clock frequency “if enough heat savings have been accumulated.” Georgiou, Abstract; col. 2, ll. 8-28; col. 3, ll. 33-38. Sheets and Georgiou therefore teach varying clock frequency based on processor activity to (1) conserve battery life, and (2) reduce heat generation in times of low activity and increase performance speed when possible. Dr. McNutt admitted that clock frequency variation was known to achieve both benefits. *See* Paper 35 at 13.

Thomas has not presented sufficient and credible evidence that a person of ordinary skill in the art would not have found it obvious, in light of the count and the other prior art discussed above, to vary clock frequency based on both processor activity and temperature. Combining the known feature of clock frequency variation based on processor activity (as described in Sheets and Georgiou) with the known feature of clock frequency variation based on



1 temperature (as described in the count) to arrive at the subject matter of the  
2 involved claims would have been a simple combination of familiar elements that  
3 yields predictable results. *See KSR*, 550 U.S. at 416. A person of ordinary skill  
4 also would have had reason to do so to conserve battery life, reduce heat  
5 generation, and improve performance speed as taught by Sheets and Georgiou.  
6 Further, we see no reason why varying clock frequency based on both factors  
7 would have been uniquely challenging or otherwise beyond the level of skill of an  
8 ordinarily skilled artisan. *See id.* at 421 (an improved product in the art is  
9 obvious if that “product [is] not [one] of innovation but of ordinary skill and  
10 common sense”); *Leapfrog Enters., Inc. v. Fisher-Price, Inc.*, 485 F.3d 1157,  
11 1161-62 (Fed. Cir. 2007). One with ordinary skill in the art is a person of  
12 ordinary creativity, not an automaton. *KSR*, 550 U.S. at 421.

13 Further, Thomas’s arguments regarding the scope of the prior art, including  
14 the count, are unpersuasive. Thomas argues that the computer system disclosed  
15 in the count is limited in various respects such that it would not have been  
16 obvious to a person of ordinary skill to combine it with prior art disclosing  
17 activity detection and clock frequency variation based on processor activity.  
18 Paper 29 at 7-13; Paper 38 at 5-6. For instance, Thomas contends that based on  
19 the description in Pippin’s specification, the “programmable” thermal sensor of  
20 the count functions like an on-off switch in outputting a single “interrupt signal”  
21 if the temperature exceeds a threshold, whereas the “temperature sensor” recited  
22 in Thomas’s involved claims is capable of *measuring* temperature and performing  
23 actions based on that *measured* temperature. Paper 29 at 7, 10-11; Paper 38 at 5-  
24 6. We disagree that the scope of what the count would have suggested to a person

1 of ordinary skill in the art is so limited, as it is the count itself rather than Pippin's  
2 specification that is deemed prior art for purposes of our analysis. A person of  
3 ordinary skill in the art also is presumed to have skills apart from what a prior art  
4 reference explicitly says. *See KSR*, 550 U.S. at 418. Further, even assuming that  
5 the count's thermal sensor is limited in the manner argued by Thomas, Thomas  
6 has not adequately explained why the alleged limitations would prevent a skilled  
7 artisan from using his or her ordinary skill to combine it with other prior art. *See*  
8 *In re Sneed*, 710 F.2d 1544, 1550 (Fed. Cir. 1983) ("[I]t is not necessary that the  
9 inventions of the references be physically combinable to render obvious the  
10 invention under review."); *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 425 (CCPA 1981) ("The  
11 test for obviousness is not whether the features of a secondary reference may be  
12 bodily incorporated into the structure of the primary reference. . . . Rather, the test  
13 is what the combined teachings of those references would have suggested to those  
14 of ordinary skill in the art.").

15 As to Sheets and Georgiou specifically, Thomas argues that the references  
16 are cumulative and were considered during prosecution of Thomas '235 and  
17 Thomas '668. Paper 38 at 6-8. We disagree that the references are cumulative to  
18 other references discussed herein. Also, whether the Examiner had considered  
19 them during prosecution of Thomas '235 and Thomas '668 does not change our  
20 view with respect to their disclosure. The references are indicative of the level of  
21 ordinary skill in the art at the time. Thomas further argues that Sheets and  
22 Georgiou relate only to reducing clock frequency when processor activity is low  
23 (e.g., when the processor is "idle"), and therefore would not have suggested  
24 Thomas's involved claims directed to a computer that is "working hard (a heavy

1 processing burden) and in danger of overheating.” Paper 38 at 7-9. We do not  
2 see, and Thomas has not pointed us to, any limitation in the claims requiring a  
3 specific, particularly “heavy” burden on the processor, or any reason why the  
4 claims would not cover varying clock frequency based on a certain lower activity  
5 rate.

6 Thomas has not met its burden to demonstrate by a preponderance of the  
7 evidence that the involved claims reciting the feature of varying clock frequency  
8 based on both processor activity and temperature would have been nonobvious in  
9 light of the count and other applicable prior art.

10  
11 *Feature 1 – An Activity Detector Monitoring Activity of a Processing Unit*

12 Claims 46-54 of Thomas ‘235 recite an “activity detector that monitors  
13 activity of said processing unit” and a clock control unit that operates to alter  
14 clock frequency based on the activity of the processing unit. Thomas contends  
15 that the involved claims would not have been obvious over the count and other  
16 prior art based on this feature. Thomas’s arguments for feature 1 largely repeat  
17 those made with respect to feature 6. See Paper 29 at 22-24; Paper 38 at 8-9.  
18 Thomas points to the allegedly “restricted control scheme” of the thermal sensor  
19 in the count, and cites Dr. McNutt’s testimony that Kenny is the closest prior art  
20 known for “monitoring processor activity for temperature control.” Paper 29 at  
21 23.

22 We disagree. As discussed above, activity detection was well known in the  
23 prior art, and it would have been well within the skill of a person of ordinary skill  
24 in the art to incorporate such functionality into the computer system recited in the

1 count so that clock frequency could be varied based on the activity. *See, e.g.,*  
2 Thomas ‘557, col. 1, ll. 18-20; Paper 38 at 3 (“Dr. McNutt agreed . . . that activity  
3 detectors . . . were known in the art”), 18 (admitted fact 80). Thus, because we  
4 conclude that Thomas has not met its burden to show that the involved claims  
5 reciting varying clock frequency based on both processor activity *and*  
6 temperature would have been nonobvious, for the reasons discussed above, we  
7 likewise conclude that Thomas has not met its burden to show that the involved  
8 claims reciting an activity detector monitoring the activity of a processing unit  
9 would not have been obvious based on the count and other applicable prior art.

10  
11 *Feature 46 – First Activating a Fan if Temperature Exceeds a First Threshold,*  
12 *and Then Reducing Clock Frequency if Temperature Exceeds a Second Threshold*

13 Thomas argues that claims 12-23 and 49-52 of Thomas ‘668 recite the  
14 feature of first activating a fan if a first temperature threshold is exceeded, and  
15 then reducing clock frequency if a second temperature threshold is exceeded. For  
16 example, claim 49 of Thomas ‘668 recites comparing the temperature of a  
17 processor to first and second predetermined temperatures, “activating a cooling  
18 fan when the temperature of the processor exceeds the first predetermined  
19 temperature,” and “reducing operational clock frequency of the processor when  
20 the temperature of the processor exceeds the second predetermined temperature.”

21 Thomas contends that the involved claims would not have been obvious over the  
22 count and other prior art based on this “two-stage cooling approach” of *first*  
23 activating a fan if a *first* temperature threshold is exceeded, and *then* reducing  
24 clock frequency if a *second* temperature threshold is exceeded. Paper 29 at 20-

22. Thomas does not point to any prior art reference as the closest prior art for purposes of feature 46, instead citing Dr. McNutt's testimony that he is not aware of any prior art that would have suggested the involved claims. Paper 29 at 21-22. We are not persuaded by Thomas's arguments.

While Thomas does not point to any prior art other than the count itself, we find the references cited by Pippin – Pippin '578 and Swamy – relevant to the involved claims reciting feature 46 and indicative of the level of ordinary skill in the art. Pippin '578 is prior art to Thomas's involved patents under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) because it is a continuation of an application filed on September 21, 1993 (prior to Thomas's admitted benefit date of June 20, 1994) and issued on November 17, 1998.<sup>2</sup> Pippin '578 discloses generating a first interrupt signal based on the temperature of a microprocessor exceeding a first threshold temperature, activating a fan and reducing clock frequency in response to the first interrupt signal, and programming a new, higher threshold temperature in response to the first interrupt signal. Pippin '578, col. 12, ll. 24-51. Then, if the processor heats up more and exceeds the new, higher threshold temperature, a second interrupt signal is generated and the clock frequency is further reduced. Pippin '578, col. 12, ll. 51-54. Thus, the only difference between Pippin '578's two-stage approach and that of the involved claims is that Pippin '578 performs *both* actions (activating a fan and reducing clock frequency) in the first stage, rather than *just* activating the fan. Notably, however, the involved claims do not preclude also reducing clock frequency in the first stage; Pippin '578 therefore

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas in its Reply (Paper 38) did not dispute that Pippin '578 is prior art for purposes of Thomas's motion.

discloses the feature that according to Thomas distinguishes over the prior art.

Further, Pippin '578 discloses that its two-stage configuration "provides close loop control of the microprocessor system clock frequency, thereby automatically reducing the temperature when overheating occurs." Pippin '578, col. 12, ll. 54-58. Dr. McNutt also agreed that "the idea of activating a fan followed by reducing clock frequency, if necessary, is disclosed in the Pippin application." See Paper 35 at 25.

Swamy similarly describes a multiple-stage process of periodically determining the processor's temperature and *either* activating a fan or reducing clock frequency in response to the processor temperature exceeding predetermined thresholds. Swamy, col. 7, ll. 10-41. Which specific action is taken in a particular circumstance "may depend on how extreme the temperature of the CPU 260 has become and how long the temperature has been at the excessive level," and the actions can be taken in "different combinations." Swamy, col. 6, l. 64-col. 7, l. 1; col. 7, ll. 30-33. Thus, Swamy also teaches a multiple-stage process with the actions (activating a fan and reducing clock frequency) taken in different sequences based on different temperature thresholds.

Thomas has not presented sufficient and credible evidence that a person of ordinary skill in the art would not have found it obvious, in light of the count and the other prior art discussed above, to first activate a fan if a first temperature threshold is exceeded and then reduce clock frequency if a second temperature threshold is exceeded. The count itself discloses performing both actions based on the temperature exceeding a single threshold, and a person of ordinary skill in the art would have known, based on Pippin '578 and Swamy, to perform the

1 actions in sequence based on two threshold temperatures. Doing so would have  
2 been a simple and common sense modification yielding predictable results and  
3 within the level of skill of an ordinarily skilled artisan. *See KSR*, 550 U.S. at 416.  
4 A person of ordinary skill also would have had reason to do so to automatically  
5 reduce the processor's temperature when overheating occurs, and to further  
6 reduce the processor's temperature when the temperature rises and additional  
7 cooling is needed, as taught by Pippin '578. Further, the particular sequence of  
8 activating a fan first and then reducing clock frequency would have been a choice  
9 among a finite number of known, predictable solutions (i.e., perform one before  
10 the other, or perform both at the same time) for a person of ordinary skill in the  
11 art.

12 As with the other features discussed above, Thomas's arguments regarding  
13 the scope of the prior art (including the count) are unpersuasive. According to  
14 Thomas, because the computer system recited in the count generates an interrupt  
15 signal based on a single threshold temperature and performs both actions of  
16 activating a fan and reducing clock frequency in response to that interrupt signal,  
17 "it is not possible to separate these two different actions by time or temperature."  
18 Paper 29 at 16-17, 20-22. Thomas also points to the allegedly "specialized  
19 nature" and "restricted capabilities" of the sensor disclosed in the count  
20 (interpreted in light of the Pippin application) and argues that Pippin did not  
21 explain how one of ordinary skill would actually modify the disclosed sensor to  
22 perform staggered cooling steps. Paper 38 at 10-12. As explained above,  
23 however, the count teaches performing both actions (activating a fan and reducing  
24 clock frequency) based on a single threshold temperature, and Pippin '578 and

Swamy teach performing the actions in sequence based on two thresholds. We see no reason why an artisan possessing ordinary skill who is aware of the prior art would not have been able to modify the sensor of the count, which uses one threshold temperature to perform both actions, to test for two threshold temperatures and perform the actions in sequence. Again, a person of ordinary skill in the art has ordinary creativity and is not an automaton. *KSR*, 550 U.S. at 421.

Thomas has not met its burden to demonstrate by a preponderance of the evidence that the involved claims reciting the feature of first activating a fan if a first temperature threshold is exceeded and then reducing clock frequency if a second temperature threshold is exceeded would have been nonobvious in light of the count and other applicable prior art.

*Feature 69 – First Reducing Clock Frequency if Temperature Exceeds a First Threshold, and Then Activating a Fan if Temperature Exceeds a Second Threshold*

Claims 24-36 of Thomas ‘235 recite a thermal manager that “causes the clocking frequency for said microprocessor to be reduced to provide thermal management when the temperature indication indicates that the temperature of said microprocessor exceeds the first temperature threshold, and activates said fan when the temperature indication indicates that the temperature of said microprocessor exceeds the second temperature threshold.” Thus, these claims recite the opposite of feature 69: *first* reducing clock frequency if a first temperature threshold is exceeded, and *then* activating a fan if a second temperature threshold is exceeded. Thomas contends that the involved claims



would not have been obvious over the count and other prior art based on this feature, and makes arguments similar to those made with respect to feature 69. Paper 29 at 16-19; Paper 38 at 10-13.

For the reasons discussed above for feature 46, we disagree with Thomas that a “two-stage cooling approach” involving two temperature thresholds would have been a nonobvious modification to the system disclosed in the count. We also disagree that the particular sequence of reducing clock frequency first and activating a fan second would have been a nonobvious modification. Thomas points to Dr. McNutt’s testimony regarding Nakagawa as applicable prior art for purposes of feature 69, but acknowledges that Nakagawa does not use a fan. *See* Paper 29 at 17-18; Paper 38 at 31 (admitted fact 165). Nakagawa therefore cannot be the closest prior art for purposes of claims reciting activating a fan.

The prior art references cited by Pippin – Pippin ‘578 and Swamy – are more relevant to the involved claims reciting the feature of reducing clock frequency first and activating a fan second. Pippin ‘578 discloses performing the same actions but in the reverse order. Pippin ‘578, col. 12, ll. 24-54. Swamy contemplates “different combinations” of the two actions, and choosing whether to reduce clock frequency or activate a fan based on “how extreme the temperature of the [processor] has become.” Swamy, col. 6, l. 64-col. 7, l. 33. Dr. McNutt also admitted that it was known at the time to “use a fan as a *last resort* to cool as a way of conserving power especially for battery-powered computers.” *See* Paper 35 at 28 (emphasis added).

Thomas has not presented sufficient and credible evidence demonstrating that in light of the count, Pippin ‘578, and Swamy, the involved claims reciting

1 first reducing clock frequency and then activating a fan would have been  
2 nonobvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art. Again, the count itself  
3 discloses performing both actions based on the temperature exceeding a single  
4 threshold, and a person of ordinary skill in the art would have known, based on  
5 Pippin '578 and Swamy, to perform the actions at different times and in different  
6 combinations based on two threshold temperatures. Doing so would have been a  
7 simple and common sense modification yielding predictable results and within the  
8 level of skill of an ordinarily skilled artisan. *See KSR*, 550 U.S. at 416. A person  
9 of ordinary skill also would have had reason to do so to reduce temperature while  
10 conserving power, as acknowledged by Dr. McNutt. *See Paper 35* at 28. Further,  
11 as with feature 46, the particular sequence of reducing clock frequency first and  
12 then activating a fan would have been a choice among a finite number of known,  
13 predictable solutions for a person of ordinary skill in the art.

14 Thomas has not met its burden to demonstrate by a preponderance of the  
15 evidence that the involved claims reciting the feature of first reducing clock  
16 frequency if a first temperature threshold is exceeded and then activating a fan if a  
17 second temperature threshold is exceeded would have been nonobvious in light of  
18 the count and other applicable prior art.

19  
20 *Feature 14 – Multi-Speed Fan*

21 *Feature 17 – Fan Speed Dependent on Temperature*

22 Thomas argues that claims 25, 34, and 36 of Thomas '235 recite the feature  
23 of fan speed dependent on temperature (feature 17), and claim 14 of Thomas '668  
24 recites the features of both a multi-speed fan (feature 14) and fan speed dependent

on temperature (feature 17). For example, as to feature 14, claim 14 of Thomas ‘668 recites a “variable speed fan.” As to feature 17, claim 25 of Thomas ‘235 recites that “the speed of said fan is dependent upon the extent that the temperature of said microprocessor exceeds the second temperature threshold.” Thomas contends that the involved claims would not have been obvious over the count and other prior art based on these features.

*Feature 14:* We begin our discussion with feature 14, and note that the count recites a fan that is activated in response to an interrupt signal generated when the microprocessor temperature exceeds a threshold temperature. However, the fan recited in the count does not have multiple speeds of operation (e.g., a fast and slow speed). Thus, the issue before us regarding feature 14 is whether claim 14 of Thomas ‘668 (the sole involved claim reciting feature 14) reciting a *multi-speed* fan would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art given the count itself, which discloses a fan in general, and other applicable prior art.

Thomas argues that because the computer system of the count uses a single threshold temperature to generate a single interrupt signal, which directs both fan activation and clock frequency reduction, it is “not possible” to separate the two different actions by time and temperature. Paper 29 at 20. Thomas fails to explain, however, why the fan of the count’s system would be incapable of operating at multiple speeds. Further, the question is not what the count in isolation teaches, but rather whether the involved claim would have been obvious given the count and any other applicable prior art. As explained below, multi-speed fans were well known in the art and a person of ordinary skill would have had reason to incorporate the feature into the count’s computer system. Thomas’s

1 argument therefore is unpersuasive.

2 Thomas also points to testimony from Dr. McNutt identifying Neal as “the  
3 closest prior art known with respect [to] the feature of fan speed and frequency.”  
4 Paper 29 at 20. Thomas argues that because Neal’s fan is always on unless it  
5 fails, Neal does not teach “fan speed control.” Paper 29 at 20. Contrary to  
6 Thomas’s argument, however, Neal discloses using the frequency of a motor  
7 pulse to drive the various speeds of a fan, thereby increasing or decreasing  
8 airflow production. Neal, col. 5, ll. 31-36. Consequently, Neal not only teaches  
9 fan speed control, but also teaches that the fan has multiple speeds of operation.  
10 A person of ordinary skill in the art would have appreciated combining the known  
11 element of controlling multiple speeds of operation in a fan, as taught by Neal,  
12 with the count’s computer system comprising a fan, in order to arrive at claim 14  
13 of Thomas ‘668. This would have been nothing more than a simple combination  
14 of familiar elements according to known methods that yields a predictable result.  
15 *See KSR*, 550 U.S. at 416.

16 Moreover, the prior art reference cited by Pippin – Dinh – is relevant to  
17 feature 14. Paper 35 at 20-21. Dinh discloses that the speed of a fan is adjustable  
18 based on the temperature within the housing of a personal computer. Dinh, col. 1,  
19 ll. 10-13. In particular, Dinh discloses that it is desirable to have two fan speeds –  
20 low and high. Dinh, col. 1, ll. 29-35. As such, Dinh teaches a multi-speed fan  
21 that can operate at low and high speeds. In addition, Dr. McNutt agreed that it  
22 was known to use variable speed fans for cooling microprocessors. Paper 38 at  
23 25 (admitted fact 125). A person of ordinary skill in the art would have  
24 appreciated combining a multi-speed fan that can operate at low and high speeds,

1 as taught by Dinh, with the fan recited in the count to arrive at claim 14 of  
2 Thomas ‘668. Further, a person of ordinary skill in the art would have been  
3 motivated to make the combination because Dinh explicitly discloses a need in  
4 the art for “a fan . . . which can increase the fan speed proportionally to the  
5 increase in the temperature of [a] computer’s elements.” Dinh, col. 1, ll. 44-46.

6 Thomas has not met its burden to demonstrate by a preponderance of the  
7 evidence that the involved claim reciting the feature of a multi-speed fan would  
8 not have been obvious in light of the count and other applicable prior art.

9 *Feature 17:* Turning to feature 17, we again note that the count recites  
10 activating a fan in response to an interrupt signal generated when the  
11 microprocessor temperature exceeds a threshold temperature. Thus, the issue  
12 before us regarding feature 17 is whether the involved claims reciting varying the  
13 speed of the fan based on temperature would have been obvious to one of  
14 ordinary skill in the art given the count itself, which discloses a fan in general,  
15 and any other applicable prior art.

16 Thomas does not point to any prior art reference as the closest prior art for  
17 purposes of feature 17 specifically (instead referring to Neal as “the closest prior  
18 art known with respect [to] the feature of fan speed and frequency”). Paper 29 at  
19 20. We find the prior art references cited by Pippen – Dinh and Swamy –  
20 relevant to feature 17. Paper 35 at 20-22. Dinh discloses adjusting the speed of a  
21 fan based on the temperature within a personal computer housing. Dinh, col. 1, ll.  
22 10-13. To provide an efficient tradeoff between fan speed and noise, Dinh  
23 increases the fan speed “proportionally to the increase in the temperature.” Dinh,  
24 col. 1, ll. 44-51. Swamy discloses repeatedly measuring the temperature of a

1 central processing unit and increasing the fan speed to cool the processor if the  
2 temperature remains high. Swamy, col. 7, ll. 10-12, 34-41 (“For example, the  
3 signal may instruct the fan 240 to turn on or increase speed if already on.”); col.  
4 2, ll. 40-49.

5 Thomas has not presented sufficient and credible evidence demonstrating  
6 that in light of the count, Dinh, and Swamy, the involved claims reciting the  
7 feature of fan speed dependent on temperature would not have been obvious to a  
8 person of ordinary skill in the art. A person of ordinary skill in the art would  
9 have known based on Dinh and Swamy to operate the fan at multiple speeds and  
10 to have the fan speed depend on temperature.<sup>3</sup> Doing so would have been a  
11 simple and common sense modification yielding predictable results and within the  
12 level of skill of an ordinarily skilled artisan. *See KSR*, 550 U.S. at 416. A person  
13 of ordinary skill also would have had reason to do so to achieve an optimal  
14 tradeoff between fan speed and noise and to counter persistent high temperature  
15 conditions, as taught by Dinh and Swamy.

16 Further, Thomas’s arguments regarding the prior art are not persuasive.

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<sup>3</sup> Pippin argues that the involved claims reciting feature 17 would be anticipated by the count because it “activate[s]” a fan in response to a temperature signal (i.e., goes from a speed of zero to a speed above zero). Paper 35 at 18-19. The involved claims of Thomas ‘235 reciting feature 17, however, recite that the “fan is *operable* in a plurality of different speeds,” and the involved claim of Thomas ‘668 recites that “when said thermal manager *activates* said fan, the speed of said fan is dependent on the temperature indication.” A person of ordinary skill in the art would not understand a fan to be *operating* or to have been *activated* when the fan has a speed of zero. Thus, we do not agree that the involved claims reciting feature 17 are anticipated by the count. Nevertheless, as explained herein, Thomas has not shown that the claims would have been nonobvious.

1 Thomas again asserts that the count's computer system activates a fan based on a  
2 single interrupt signal, Paper 29 at 20, but does not explain *why* such functionality  
3 would preclude a person of ordinary skill in the art from modifying the system to  
4 have a multi-speed fan with fan speed dependent on temperature. In addition,  
5 Thomas fails to account for other prior art like Swamy, which takes periodic  
6 measurements of processor temperature and increases fan speed based on the  
7 changing temperature. Swamy, col. 7, ll. 10-60.

8 Thomas has not met its burden to demonstrate by a preponderance of the  
9 evidence that the involved claims reciting the feature of fan speed dependent on  
10 temperature would not have been obvious in light of the count and other  
11 applicable prior art.

## 12 13 CONCLUSION

14 For all of the foregoing reasons regarding the above-identified claim  
15 features, Thomas has not satisfied its burden of proof in showing that it is entitled  
16 to the relief requested, i.e., to have claims 24 and 25 of Thomas '557, claims 24-  
17 36, 41, 42, and 46-54 of Thomas '235, and claims 1-5, 12-23, and 37-52 of  
18 Thomas '668 designated as not corresponding to the count.

19 Thomas's Motion 1 is *denied*.

Interference No. 105,802  
Thomas v. Pippin

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